



BLM Resource Advisory Councils

Partners Across The West

COLORADO NORTHWEST RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2019-001

Resolution in Support of Practical, Cost-effective Wild Horse Management

Whereas: As of March 2018, the Bureau of Land Management estimated there to be 82,000 horses and burros on BLM managed rangelands in 11 western states where it has been determined those specified lands will sustainably support only 27,000. Therefore, in March of 2018 there were 55,000 excess horses and burros on the rangeland causing irreparable damage to many ecosystems, and

Whereas: The on-range population continues to grow at ~20% per year, doubling the population every four years without significant pro-active management, and

Whereas: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) currently has over 50,000 head of wild horses and burros in holding facilities nationwide, costing taxpayers \$50 million (61% of BLM's annual horse & burro budget), and

Whereas: BLM can, on an average annual basis, adopt out less than 3,000 head per year with the existing adoption criteria, and

Whereas: The currently available fertility control methods are not adequate at controlling population growth, and

Whereas: The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act currently requires BLM to remove excess horses from the range, offer them for adoption, those that are offered unsuccessfully for adoption three times or are over ten years of age, "shall be made available for sale without limitation including through auction to the highest bidder, at local sale yards or other convenient livestock selling facilities", and

Whereas: Congress places a rider in Appropriations restricting the destruction or sale of healthy horses nearly every year, and

Whereas: Selling the excess horses currently in holding facilities would allow BLM to better manage a sustainable number of horses on the range within the current budget to prevent continued and accelerated degradation of the rangelands by excess horses, and

Whereas: At a local level, Rio Blanco County, Colorado has one Herd Management Area (HMA) with an Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 135 – 235 and there is a current estimated population of 1,160 horses including 2019 foals (5X AML) within the County with no indications of possible gathers in the near future, and

Whereas: Currently "wild" horses and burros are often found outside of the Herd Management Areas to the detriment of public and private land, and

Whereas: BLM WH&B Management Handbook (H-4700-1, Chapter 3) states:

- "Habitat for WH&B is composed of four essential components: forage, water, cover, and space. These components must be present within the HMA in sufficient amounts to sustain healthy WH&B populations and healthy rangelands over the long term. If they are not present in sufficient amounts, the authorized officer should consider amending or revising the LUP to remove the area's designation as an HMA."
- "A recurring pattern of WH&B movement out of the HMA to access forage, water, or thermal or hiding cover is an indication that year-long WH&B use cannot be sustained. If one or more of the key habitat components is missing, the HMA should be considered as unsuitable for yearlong use. In these situations, the authorized officer should consider removing the area's designation as an HMA through LUP (Land Use Plan)."

Whereas: When there has been forage degradation, the amount of available forage is not capable of supporting numbers in excess of AML. Hauling water and feed to maintain numbers in excess of AML would further exacerbate ongoing damages to rangeland resources in the area.

Therefore Be It Resolved: the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council encourages and supports Congress, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Department of the Interior to follow the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act and sell the excess horses without limitation;

Be It Further Resolved: the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council encourages and supports the removal of any Appropriations Rider which prevents the unrestricted sale of horses and burros;

Be It Further Resolved: the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council supports the BLM re-evaluating its existing adoption requirements, including facility requirements, in order to increase average annual adoptions;

Be It Further Resolved: the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council supports fertility control, including sterilization that is efficient and cost effective;

Be It Further Resolved: the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council opposes supplemental feeding or watering of horses other than for baiting and trapping for removal from the range to prevent further ecosystem degradation when the numbers exceed the AML.

Passed, approved, and adopted April 25, 2019.



Received by Designated Federal Officer
Connie Clementson



Mike Pritchard, Chair
Northwest Resource Advisory Council